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DECORATION & FURNITURE

FORGED AND "RESTORED" ANTIQUE FURNITURE.



HE forging of antique furniture is a regular branch of industry. In most purchases, paying a fair price gives the buyer a reasonable chance of getting an honest article; but in buying things of this nature, the reverse holds good. Security lies rather in the price being so low as to make it evident that no modern craftsman could have done the work for the money. Most of these forgeries are, however, so clumsy as to be easily detected by an experienced collector. The power to judge in such matters must chiefly be the result of practice, yet some hints can be thrown out which may be found of use. Such hints are given by Mark Mallett in *Amateur Work*, from which we quote the following: "A quality prized in old oak is the dark color which it acquires by absorbing ammonia from the atmosphere, through a long course of years. The forger commonly uses new wood, which is most readily available, and stains it with an artificial color. He makes it even darker than the old, but at the same time he fails to give the rich, mellow hue which comes from age. His work has, if I may so express it, a sort of metallic appearance, which suggests the blacklead brush, and may be detected without much difficulty.

"Again, a want of antiquarian accuracy often exposes the imitation. He does not observe, or believes that he can improve upon, the rules of construction followed by the old workman. In the tables, chairs, and such like articles, of the seventeenth century, the legs are always strengthened and held together by cross-bars near the floor. In later days, these ties have commonly been dispensed with, as inconvenient and unsightly; and each leg has, so to speak, been left to stand alone in the world. The forger frequently does not remember this; and I have seen many elaborately-carved and deeply-colored tables, the independent character of whose legs at once marked them as not genuine antiques.

"At other times we may see articles professing to be old, of a kind on which old carvers were never accustomed to spend their skill. Passing lately by a London shop, I was attracted by a fine carved bureau. That it was not modern I could see at once by its general outline. The style of the carving and the color of the wood were such as at a superficial glance might have passed for genuine Stuart work; but to see such carving on so late an object as a bureau, roused my suspicions, and made me examine closely. I soon saw that the thing, in its then state, was a forgery. The bureau had been a plain oak article of the earlier part of last century, and the dealer, in order to enhance its value, had had it carved in the style of the middle of the seventeenth

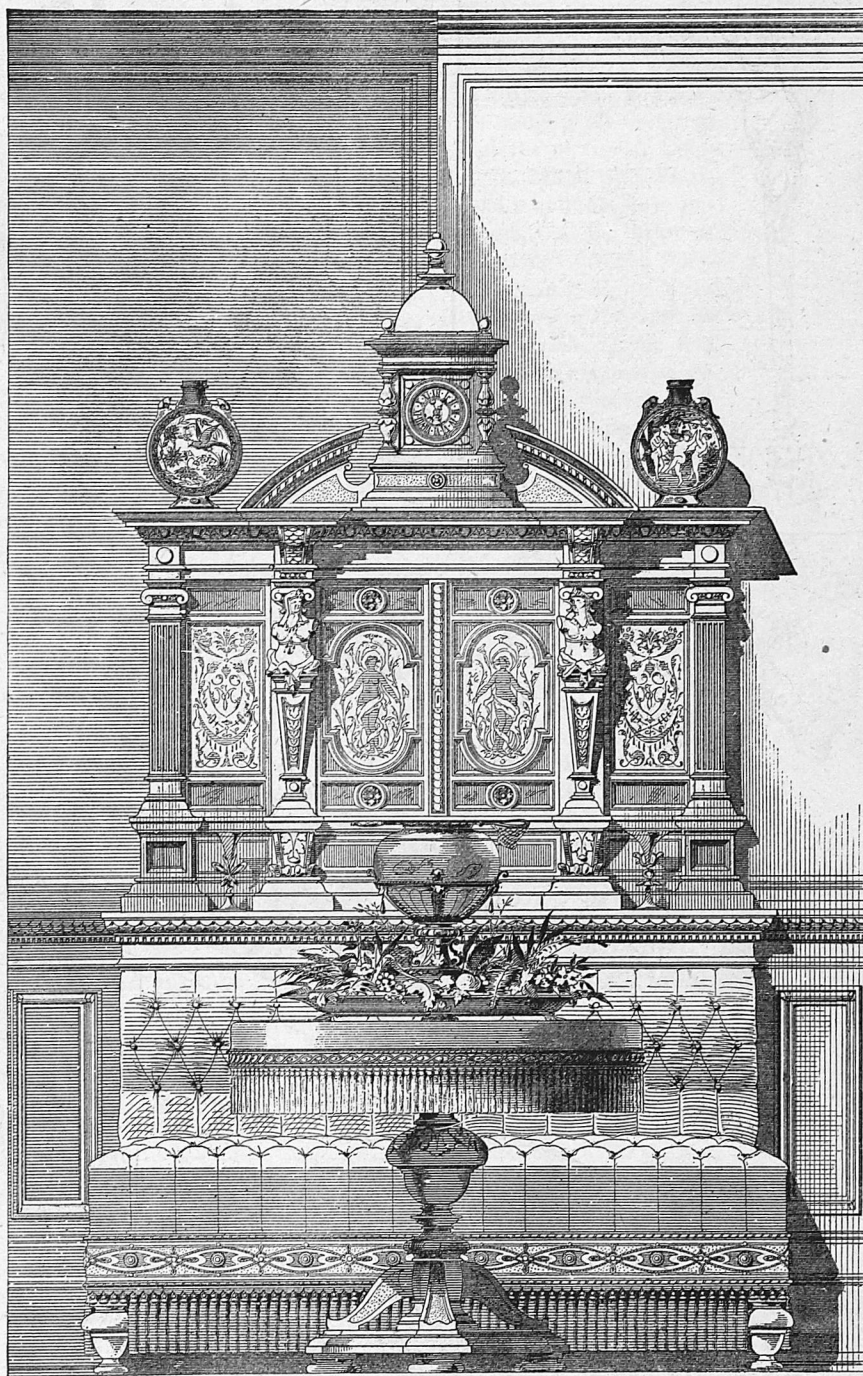
century. The fact of the oak being old had permitted it to take a fine color."

A few hints on the conversion of old things to modern uses are also given by the ingenious Mr. Mallett, who evidently knows all the tricks of the business. He shows how, with some little contrivance, a chest may be made to do service as a sideboard: "In the middle compartment we have a chest about four feet long, almost in its original state. But as in its present position, some new means of opening it will be necessary, we must do one of two things—either saw round the two outer front panels, put hinges to them,

hand, new ones may be made. In the higher compartment I have placed a central recess, and two small lockers, surmounted by a shelf. The back of this compartment is formed of the front of the second chest, one of whose carved panels shows at the back of the recess. The lids of the lockers are small panels from the ends of the chest, originally plain, but now carved to resemble those of the chest No. 1. I may here mention that in copying the flat surface decoration of panels, an easy method of transferring the patterns is by laying a piece of paper over the original, rubbing it over with shoemaker's heel ball, which will give the raised surfaces in black, and then pasting the paper over the new panel to be carved. The four pilasters which flank the lockers are two joint stool legs, sawn through their centres. Some odd scraps of carving fill the space above the shelf. This piece of furniture might be made more simply by omitting the lockers in the upper compartments; but in any case, very little beyond the component parts of the two chests would be required to form it."

It is not too much to say that nine tenths of all the "antique" sideboards for sale at the bric-a-brac shops in New York as well as in London are built up after this fashion. When about to buy an "antique" sideboard, examine it carefully, and you will generally find it is made of one or more old chests with modern carving, attached mouldings, and new legs.

THE illustration on this page shows an ingenious combination of a wall ottoman with a cabinet above, having a somewhat similar effect to that produced by placing a sofa in front of a fireplace, as is sometimes done in summer to hide the latter from view. This novel article of furniture is of German origin, Müller being the designer. We cannot commend it entirely. It is rather stiff in outline; the long upholsterer's fringe is objectionable, as is also the mutilation of the caryatides. On the opposite page, the design, intended for a hall chimney-piece, is Elizabethan in character. It may be constructed of fumigated oak or black walnut, the small centre panel in the upper part being of bevelled glass. The two side panels in the upper part of the chimney-piece and the oblong panel in the centre of frieze may be of black marble, while the tiles may be plain and low in tone of color.



WALL OTTOMAN WITH CABINET ABOVE.

and fit up the interior as cupboards; or leave our chest to do the office of a chest still, and get at the inside by sawing the lid through the middle from end to end. This being furnished with fresh hinges, will allow the front half of the lid to be opened, without interfering with the back half and the superstructure raised upon it. Let us suppose that a second chest, of much the same size, is at the worker's disposal. Its back will serve as a back for our open space in the lower compartment. The bottom of this can be made from its lid. The supports may be made from the debris of a broken-up table, or if none such are at

plates to the woodwork now made in old oak and other dark woods by amateurs adds very much to their handsome and antique appearance. In a recent number of *The (London) Queen*, it was shown how they can be made at home both for economy and amusement. The first things to be considered are the tools, which are simple and inexpensive, and can be procured at any hardware store. They consist of a few files, large or small, according to the work. Files are made flat, round, half-round, or rat-tailed, and are of different degrees of fineness—the rougher to do the preliminary coarse work, filing down the brass to

ORNAMENTAL BRASS WORK.

THE addition of brass clamps, corners, and ornamental hinge-